RESTORATION REVIEW

The Restoration Mind . . .

RESTORATION AND RECONCILIATION

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Even if it may be cumbersome, the word *reconciliation* is a beautiful one, and pregnant with meaning. Despite the efforts of modern versions to use a simpler term, it is doubtful if any other word will do as well in representing the idea in Greek. Even *The Living Bible's* "restoring the world to Himself" doesn't seem to say it as well as the old term reconciliation, even though it does help to point up the meaning of *katallage*. The classical writers used the term to refer to an exchange between persons, such as in a business deal, or the exchange of things of equivalent value. This original two-sided implication in the term is important to the scriptural meaning, which is that God is giving something, as well as man, in making reconcilation possible.

In the scriptures reconciliation is always between persons, never things. To be reconciled means "to be made friendly again" or even "to settle a quarrel" between persons. The idea of "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" is that through Jesus God is restoring friendship between himself and man. Because of sin God has a quarrel with mankind. The Christ, standing between man's sin and God's wrath, is the means whereby the quarrel is settled. It is clear enough that without Jesus there can be no restoration of friendship. This truth is important to us in understanding restoration, for its shows that restoration is God-initiated. It is God's work in us through Christ.

Restoration is not, therefore, a reclamation of things, ordinances and doctrines from the distant past, however useful these things may be in the divine initiation. Restoration is rather the work of grace in our lives. God is restoring friendship by an act of his love. What Jesus did for us is God's way of saying "I love you, just as you are I love you." This is the ground of the divine friendship. This is the gospel: that God loves us even in our sin and that He makes all things new for us in Jesus.

Like Isaiah, who could not see the holiness of God until he saw the full measure of his own uncleanness, we will not see the meaning of reconciliation until we see man as a rebel against God. It is not simply that man

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Like Isaiah, who could not see the holiness of God until he saw the full measure of his own uncleanness, we will not see the meaning of reconciliation until we see man as a rebel against God. It is not simply that man has erred or that he is inadequate, nor is it a question of a misunderstanding. It is a case of mutiny — a rebellion far more serious than ever exists on the human level. The essence of mutiny is that it is an attempted take-over of the power of the constituted authority, and this is what man has done in reference to God. Even though God is his creator, man wants to take over and run his life to suit himself. He doesn't want God to get in his way. Sin is not only mutiny against God's constituted authority over him, but also a rebellion against his own nature as a creature of heaven. Down deep inside himself man longs for God and reality. He is religious by nature, and he

longs to be disciplined by that power he recognizes to be greater than himself. But he rebels against all this because of his pride. His desire to be the center of the universe and the controller of his own destiny is at the heart of the mutiny.

Even God has but one force that can pierce such gross rebellion. This is love. God reaches out through Jesus to tell man that He is his friend and that He wants the intended friendship to be restored. This is reconciliation, and so Paul can say in Rom. 5:11: "We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation." This means that any of us, like faithful Abraham, can be called "the friend of God." What a glorious relationship, to be a friend of God! Abraham was God's friend because he *believed* God. Simple trusting faith is in every generation a rare commodity. Do we really believe what God promises? If so, we are his friends.

The alienation between God and man is initiated by man's rebellion, but it is consummated by God's wrath. The enmity between God and man is thus man's mutiny on the one hand and God's anger on the other. But God's wrath does not contradict His love. He could not leave man in his rebellion and thereby allow the world to degenerate into a graveyard of corruption and violence. His love demanded that He act. He could not allow His purpose for creating man to be frustrated forever. The beauty of all this is that God's love and grace more than matches man's sin and rebellion. It is this that makes reconciliation possible. It is not a foot race that God barely wins. Paul could say "The grace of our Lord overflowed for me," while Peter could speak of the "great mercy" that gives us a living hope.

And so we have those great words "God was in Christ . . ." God did something at the Cross that makes man's friendship with God possible. He too suffered, for He gave His own Son. This is what gives moral content to Jesus' death on the Cross. It is not an exhibition of cruelty and injustice, but the sublime act of God's love. "God was in Christ" means that God became flesh, that He personally suffered as a man for man. God's love and sorrow were somehow mingled. Isaac Watts saw this great truth in these lines from his "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross. "

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown.

Since God made possible man's reconciliation through Jesus, the way of friendship with God is now open, and so we his servants have the ministry of reconciliation. This is the message of unity, that men can be friends again, with each other and with God, because of what God has done in Christ. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by

the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" Rom. 5:10.

Notice the universality of the reconciliation: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespass, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation." He is not referring only to the "elect" or only to one nation of whatever color or creed, but to all men however depressed they may be. Since Paul uses *cosmos* here — "reconciling the *cosmos* unto himself" — one could conclude that he is referring to all of nature, to all of His creation. In Rom. 8:20-25 Paul is saying that all of God's creation is subject to futility and that nature itself is in need of redemption, and that this deliverance will one day come. So even nature is included in the reconciliation in that it too will be restored to God in glory.

But we cannot make this mean instant salvation for all men, but that reconciliation is possible for any man who *wants* to be a friend of God. Just as God responded to the dilemma of sin by His presence in Christ, so we must respond to Christ as the only way there is to friendship. Even God cannot and will not become a friend to one who does not want to be His friend. This is where the Lord's disciples come in. We have this glorious ministry of reconciliation, and it is up to us to accept this ministry with a sense of urgency and thus motivate men to want God.

We believe that the Lord made immersion in water the means of responding in faith to what God has done in order that man would have *something* he could do to express his acceptance of what God has done for him. Since baptism had long been meaningful in Jewish religion, it was an appropriate act for Jesus to select, especially since it so well symbolizes what Jesus did for man in the death, burial and resurrection. This is why it is right for us restorationists to seek to restore immersion as that "cultivation of grace," to use Campbell's description of baptism, whereby man responds to the gospel.

This gives more meaning to Peter's words in Acts 2. It was the urgency of the message of reconciliation that led him to speak of Jesus as the answer to the human predicament: "Let all the house of Israel know with assurance that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." When they responded with "Men and brothers, what shall we do?," it was a request for *something* they could do to show their acceptance of God in Christ. And so Peter says to them: "Repent and be immersed, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Immersion is therefore the penitent believer's way of demonstrating to God that he has accepted the proffered reconciliation.

We have said that restoration is not merely a reclamation of ordinances from the distant past, but it is a recapturing of the meaning of God's grace in our lives. This has to apply to immersion too. Our ministry is not to preach baptism, nor is it to set the world straight on

baptism. It is rather to show what God has done in Christ because of His love for man. It is the ministry of reconciliation that is ours. But the fact remains that man is to make a faithful response to God's concern for him, and Jesus taught us that response is immersion. Once we get the *means* of reconciliation straight in our minds, we should have no difficulty understanding the response that the Lord ordained.

In thinking of our task of restoration we should be aware of the sense of urgency with which the apostle speaks of the work of reconciliation. Basic to the restoration plea is that disciples of Jesus are to be brothers and are to treat each other as such. To be reconciled to God surely means to be reconciled to each other. One cannot be a friend with God again without being a friend again with his brothers in Christ. Here must be our call for urgency. How can we continue to be a divided people when we have been given the very ministry that makes men one with God and with each other? — *the Editor*

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A CASE OF BAD RELIGION

Recently I heard a good friend of mine say something like "I've just got over a bad case of religion." At the time the remark seemed to be as appropriate as it was amusing, but on second thought I think the friend could have better said *I've just got over a case of bad religion.* Religion has had a hard time of it in recent years, especially among the youth, and my friend's remarks were in that direction that says, in effect, that religion is a bad deal. And yet my friend is a person of deep religious faith, and he is definitely moving toward what I would call a true and meaningful religion. He may have once had a case of bad religion, but I doubt if his condition should ever be described as a bad case of religion. The distinction is important.

There is no reason for the term *religion* to be offensive. It refers to no disease that one might contract. It is not in itself either subversive or perversive. It is not something that one might "catch" and have a bad case of. Its Latin derivation suggests that it is an experience in which man returns to the God who created him, for it means "to bind back" or "to bind together." Religion is thus a lost man's pilgrimage back to God. Or it might be described as the love story in which the relationship between God and man is made whole.

There is but scant reference to the word itself in the Bible. In Acts 26:5 Paul speaks to King Agrippa about "our religion," referring to Judaism. James 1:26 refers to "vain religion," referring to an undisciplined life. In the next verse "religion that is pure and undefiled" is described as benevolence toward widows and orphans, as well as keeping oneself unstained by the world. That is about it insofar as the Bible is concerned, depending on what disposition translators make of the Greek words involved. In any event

in the English word *religion* we have a meaningful and useful term that has nothing within it that need turn anyone off.

The English dictionary does indicate that the term has to do especially with the *expression* of religious faith or its external form. It embraces not simply one's personal and private commitments, but his worship, ethics, philosophy, and institutional relations as well. One's religion has to do with the way he treats his family as well as the way he views the world, and with the way he meets his obligations as well as the way he explains the nature of God.

There are too many positive elements about religion for it to be accounted *ipso facto* bad. Even if it be contagious it need not necessarily be a disease, and there is no reason to insist on its demise. I agree with my friend Krister Stendahl, dean at Harvard Divinity School, who in the last *Bulletin* says that "There is no sound basis for any fear that religion has no future. It is not a precious flower about to die out. The hunger for God is one of the grand forces in human existence. Man is an incurable religious being."

But that religion can be bad is obvious enough. One only needs to read Cohen's essay on *The Dark Side of Religion* to be reminded of how much inhumanity has been committed in the name of religion. Magic, superstition and ignorance have fostered homicide, wars, and burning of heretics. And to bring the truth of bad religion to our own door, we must concede that "Church of Christ religion" has not always blessed those who embraced it, and it was supposedly that religion that my friend had a bad case of. But I still insist that it was a case of bad Church of Christ religion rather than a bad case of Church of Christ religion, for even when we would shun the expression "Church of Christ religion," the truth is that many of our people in the Church of Christ have a vital and dynamic religious faith. Others have a case of bad religion. What is the difference?

The answer to that depends in part on what we make religion mean. If with Dean Stendahl we see it as man's hunger for God, then bad religion is a profession of God without any real desire for Him. If with the philosopher Whitehead we resort to a lighter definition and say that religion is what man does in his solitude, then bad religion is when God makes no real difference when man is alone. I think of religion as man's search for harmony between himself and that which he considers to be the highest in the universe. This makes bad religion that which contributes nothing to that search for harmony or even frustrates the search by a demand for sectarian loyalties.

The scriptures teach us that religion is bad when there is a form of godliness but a denial of the power thereof. Jesus' message to the religious Pharisees is that they were confusing form and substance, which always makes for bad religion. "You place upon men burdens too heavy for them to bear," Jesus told them. They were making too much of form and not enough of substance. The substance of religion has more to do with what one *is* rather than what he does, with *being* rather than doing. While we do well *both* to tithe and

to do the weightier things of the law, it is often the case that men get so involved in the intricacies of tithing that they neglect the things that matter most, and Jesus shows us that this is bad religion. If we can get the *being* right, the proper kind of doing should naturally follow. This has to do with sincerity, love and good will. Paul is telling us this when he insists that "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but peace, justice and joy in the Holy Spirit." It is the truth that the lawyer saw in responding to Jesus' teaching that the greatest commandments are to love God with all one's personality and one's neighbor as one's self, for he saw that what really mattered was not form, a matter of sacrifices and offerings, as he had been taught. When Jesus saw that he got the point he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Religion is bad when it makes man the means of preserving its institutions rather than making man the end that its institutions serve. Jesus was willing to neglect the letter of the law by healing on the sabbath day, insisting that the sabbath is made for man rather than man being made for the sabbath. It is this that makes Communism a bad religion: it is willing to sacrifice the individual for the sake of the state.

The church has sometimes sacrificed man in order to preserve its forms, and it has sometimes forgotten its mission to minister to suffering humanity in order to support its institutions. This is of course bad religion.

It is good religion that causes man to love and to care and to hope; it is bad religion that oppresses him with fear and uncertainty. Good religion causes man to seek not only knowledge but also truth, such as the truth that is Jesus. Bad religion is satisfied with a knowledge about Jesus rather than the truth that is Jesus. Good religion makes one free, expands his mind, and invites him to a higher plane of being. Bad religion embalms him in obscurantism, traditionalism, and sectarianism.

Forms, traditions and institutions are part and parcel of religion. This is organized religion, the established church, all of which is all right so long as its mission is to serve man rather than to use man. In serving man organized religion has been a great blessing to the world, but when it has used man it has been a great curse. But our point is that religion can be good and often is. We make it good by making it work in our hearts. We make it good by being unaware of religion as such and by losing ourselves in service to others. — *the Editor*

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A Personal Testimony . . .

THE LORD HATH MADE ME RICH

Ouida says that I should not talk like that, telling people that we are rich. It leaves the wrong impression, she thinks. We have of course been "rich toward God" all these years, or at least that has been our intention, and our marital relations have been so blessed that we are surely among the wealthiest of people in that regard. There is the added riches of physical and mental health. All this my dear wife gratefully acknowledges, but she questions my leaving the impression that we are *financially* wealthy. But I insist that we are. The Lord hath *made me rich!* Like he did Abraham, Joseph, and Solomon — and Alexander Campbell. Since this paper is sort of what one reader calls "personal journalism," I am compelled to be personal enough to share with you what God has done for us.

In deference to Ouida's complaint it is in order to observe that wealth is a relative thing, and so it takes less to make some people rich than others. So poor was I for so much of my life that it takes no great fortune to make me wealthy. It is different with Ouida. Her schoolteacher father was always employed, and he had only four children to support. She never had to experience the cruel ordeal of being part of an unemployed family, year after year during the depression, or the shame of being on welfare. She never knew what it was to live in another man's house and not be able to pay the rent, or to stand by helplessly while the man turns off the utilities because of unpaid bills.

All this I experienced and much more, along with six brothers and one sister. The trying years of the 30's, along with the struggles of the 40's, made a deep impression on me. I sometimes hear a grateful soul, now proud of the lean years of his youth, say, "I was poor, but I didn't know it." Well, I was poor and I knew it. It is hard for me to have pleasant memories of those years. It was a bitter cup for a growing boy. Poverty is oppressive when one's memory of his mother has to include her constant anxiety over unpaid bills.

I always had some kind of job during those years, even when I was but a lad of 10. I threw papers, sold magazines, peddled donuts, and washed dishes in a cafe while still in the grades. The latter job was especially remunerative, for I got all I wanted to eat and a dollar a week. I was able sometimes on Saturdays to take a lunch to my mother, and I did a little stealing along the way.

This cafe owner I worked for was a bootlegger, and he used me in plying his trade. He hid the whiskey in behind a service station across the street. When a sale was made I would dash across the street in the dark and surreptitiously place a bottle of the stuff under my apron. My mother, an adamant teetotaler, never knew what was going on. After all, I never drank the stuff, I only sold it. And I managed somehow during those prohibition years to make more than a dollar a week!

But one of those trips across the street in the dark proved to be ill-fated. Returning with a bottle under my apron, I was met by policemen and arrested. On the way to headquarters I had the feeling of becoming a man, and even now it is hard for me to realize that I was no older than my 12-year old Benjy. I would be horrified if he had such experiences. At the station a policewoman lectured to me about "going to Huntsville (the state penitentiary) one of these days," but I paid no attention to her, for I really wasn't that kind of boy and I knew it. I was mama's boy and I wasn't going to veer too far. For awhile I ran with a milk-stealing gang, and once I had to hide in tall grass all night to avoid police searchlights. When the gang was more experienced and decided to move up to stealing cars, I checked out. Milk I knew, but automobiles was a different world. The gang leader went to prison for car theft.

As a kid I was never able to understand why my family had to be so poor, but it was a way of life that I came to accept. The only bicycle I had I bought myself, a secondhand job that I paid out at 50 cents a week shagging packages for a drugstore. Clothes were "hand-me-downs," the term Mother used; our typical fare at the table was cornbread and beans. This kind of life would have been all right, if only we could have paid our bills. Being poor was one thing, but poverty was something else. I recall one cold morning when there was no food in the house, Mother suggested that I might go to the A & P and get a few groceries on credit, since I worked around the neighborhood and was well known. The manager, and to this day I say *bless him*, let me have what I wanted. I took the groceries to Mother and then began to weep, explaining that I never wanted to do that again. She took me into her arms and assured me tearfully, "Dear boy, you'll never again have to do that." I suppose now that she resolved then and there that she would starve before she would again hurt me like that. Even now I can hardly bear the thoughts of *her* hurts through all those years.

This must not grow into an extended autobiography, even though my life has always been eventful and in places almost unbelievable. It is a story I may someday tell in detail, to show what the Christ has done for me if for no other reason. I have made my point about being poor, and you are better able to appreciate the story that follows, especially in reference to my claim that the Lord has made me rich.

Back in 1967-68 a brother in the Lord, Ralph Hancock, kept insisting that Ouida and I should go into the fried chicken to-go business, an enterprise that was making him even wealthier. He was the president of the outfit that would give us a franchise and teach us the know-how. All we needed was a lot of money! Ralph might as well have talked about our building a textile factory or drilling for oil in the gulf. I was a college professor who was doing well enough, and I already had more outside activities than I could care for. But Ralph kept on, confident that I could retire from teaching the day we opened the chicken place, and thus give all my time to the Lord's work, if I chose. Persuaded in part by the

need to provide a better job for one of my brothers, who could serve as manager, we decided to go for it if we could raise the money. Ralph insisted that we mortgage our home, if necessary. He was that confident.

God worked wonders in putting us in that business. Our banker trusted us beyond the ordinary, enabling us to borrow the full amount for the enterprise — after making me take him to Dallas so that he could taste the chicken! And it was only an act of God that made possible the best location in town, a self-standing building out in front of Denton Center, our principle shopping center. Another chicken to-go outfit negotiated for it, but failed to get it, and I was assured that a small business man had no chance to get such a prize spot, that they wanted the big boys in such locations. Having no better sense than to try anyway, I told the man that we'd pay a year's rent in advance if he had any doubts about us. He let us have it without the advanced rent.

In the meantime I had already signed a lease for a less desirable location, though still good, situated as it was next to one of our universities. But the lessor returned the contract unsigned because of some technicality, leaving me free to take the prize location that was to do so much for us. So good was the location and such an unexpected boon that Ralph's company offered me $15,000 for it before we spent the first dollar toward improving the place.

Ouida and I are convinced that none of this was accidental, but that He who gives men the power to gain silver and gold had a hand in it all. With a good product, efficient management, and a top location we were destined to do well, despite the presence of Colonel Sanders in the next block, but we hardly expected to do as well as we did, even though Ralph always said that we would.

We opened with almost no advertising, and when the big day came I placed a "Now Open" sign out in front and before that day was over we sold $600.00 worth of chicken. As Ralph said we would, we sold chicken until it came out our ears! The Colonel soon became No.2 as we went on to sell more than one-half million dollars worth of chicken in the next 38 months. It was unbelievable.

My brother did a great job managing for us and after two years started his own chicken place in a nearby town, where he continues to do well. Then for the next 14 months Ouida ran the place while I continued teaching, lending a hand the best I could. While we never had it so good financially, we realized that such an arrangement could be only temporary, for the pace was terrific. Now you wonder how we ever managed to get this paper published at all, even if late. Anyway, our plan all along was to make some money, if possible, by owning it for awhile and then selling to someone whose life was more in that direction.

Midway in this enterprise the Dallas outfit that started us sold their dozen or so stores to a big corporation in California that wanted to conglomerate in the direction of the chicken business, which resulted in our being allowed to go independent, with all the rights of the know-how and the use of the trade name Chick A Go-Go. This saved us thousands of dollars in franchise fees, another blessing along the way.

One of Ralph's partners continued to manage the Dallas operation for the new owners, who proceeded to build another 15 or 20 stores. This man, tiring of the ways of big organizations, decided to go back into business on his own, and his first stop was our place in Denton. We were pleased to sell the place to him, for he is a delightful person, a good friend, and an excellent business man. He continues to do as well or better than we did, which is gratifying to us. But this time, over three years later, he offered us somewhat more than $15,000!

The upshot of all this is that Ouida and I can now retire from all moneymaking endeavors, including teaching, and give all our time to these other interests, provided of course that we live as moderately as we always have. How God has blessed us! I never dreamed of retiring on an adequate income at age 52. We started that business on our knees, praying that we might bless the community with a good product, praying for our employees and the scores of problems that were involved, and praying that we might sell to the right party. All this God granted and we praise Him for His goodness toward us. Thank God for making us rich. If not Ouida, *me!*

In the meantime I lost my job at Bishop College. They had to fire 40 professors, some black as well as white, in order to solve budgetary problems, and this after taking me away from the security of a state university. But the Lord had already provided for me, allowing me to retire from teaching if I preferred to do so. The experiences at Bishop College was also a gift of God, for it honed my sensitivities in a way that nothing else could have, and in leaving I take a part of the black world with me.

So at this juncture in my life I seem to be standing at a fork in the road, uncertain as yet as to what direction I shall go. But I have miles and miles yet to go, that's for sure, and I have always been one to take the less-traveled road. Ouida thinks I will choose to return to the classroom eventually, this being the heart of my ministry as well as being where my heart lies. If so, God will lead in this direction.

Now you have the background to my mini-meeting plan, which is proving to be most rewarding. Thus far this is the way the Lord has led. It is a blessing to have this alternative, to be able to do this at my own expense. The high cost of travel does tax our resources somewhat, especially when I am on the go nearly all time, but I am convinced that if this is what God wants for me now, he will bless our investments to such an extent as to continue to make it possible.

For years now I have resisted temptations to be a party man, but if someone were to come up with the notion of a chicken party, I would surely be vulnerable. At least I doff my hat when I pass a *chicken* farm! I see now that God even uses fowl play His wonders to perform. — *the Editor*

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Third In A Series . . .

SOME CHURCH OF CHRIST HEROES

This time around I want to tell of some of the couples that I know in the Lord, married folk that exemplify so beautifully what it means to be a disciple of Christ. But the two couples I introduce to you here are not even a tithing of the many fine families I know in the Church of Christ across the land who are among my heroes in the Lord. Surely our people are among the sweetest, dearest, and most dedicated Christians in the world, and they are intelligent and responsible people, helping to build a better world by means of a more spiritual church. But I cannot tell about them all.

I select these two couples to tell you about because they stand for those values and ideals that brought this country greatness, principles that I fear are slipping from us in this undisciplined age. The first couple I will introduce exemplifies to me those values that are most to be desired in the advancing years of life and retirement, so they have something to say to those in the sunset years, if not to youth as well. The other couple is much younger and still within the throes of rearing a family in these difficult times and of making a living, but they are both handicapped by life's cruel vicissitudes, one by deafness and the other by lameness.

I met Al and Johnnie Weeks for the first time here in Denton. They had parked their trailer in the shopping center near our place of business and had eaten the best chicken in town without realizing who owned the joint. There they spent the night before continuing their homeward trek to Oregon, but not before we had a good visit together. Al was passing out samples of *Mission* magazine, which was then still new, endeavoring to pry open some minds through responsible journalism. I could tell then that Al was a kind, gentle and unassuming man, while his wife was quiet, dignified and easy to be around.

We corresponded some along the way, but I was able to get better acquainted with them while in their home this fall for mini-meetings in Eugene. As is often the case, the visit did me more good then it did them. I was impressed with people who had their priorities straight and who had learned the fine art of living. Johnnie is just plain Johnnie without show or pretense. You can take her or leave her, but she will remain her own

honest self, busy being the woman she sees herself to be. She loves cooking and is pleased to be in the kitchen, and this is her gift from God. Many women begrudge time spent in the kitchen, and cooking is boring. They had rather work out somewhere and give such domestic chores a lick and a miss and let it go at that. But Johnnie's kitchen is her laboratory. There she uses her creative talents in continual experimentation, and I just love for her to experiment on me!

Living near some of her children, she is also busy being a loving mother and grandmother, but always in a quiet and simple way. She reminds me of an electric power plant near my home when I was a kid. Its generators churned out enough power to illumine the entire neighborhood, but they never made any noise. The plant was quiet, clean and *powerful*. We kids played on its rich green lawn while the dynamos grinded on in silence. Johnnie is like that. Her presence is refreshing like the rich green grass, but one senses that there is power there, the power of love, wisdom and understanding, wrapped in quiet dignity.

There was something of a family crisis while I was there. Their daughter in faraway Arizona was ill and they were receiving periodic calls through the day as to her condition. One such call came early in the morning, but at an expected hour. The phone kept ringing, so I decided I had better answer it for them. It took some rather firm raps on their partially open door to arouse them. I thought then: these folks have learned to live in crisis; most people would have climbed the walls all night. Theirs is a life of simple trusting faith. They have learned to "hang loose," confident that everything is going to be all right, so when it is time to sleep, they sleep.

Al is nearing 65, but he is much younger than that in body and spirit. He takes early morning runs around the block, reads a lot, writes letters, and serves as a quiet rebel in the Church of Christ, really believing that what we do today will make a difference tomorrow. Al worked hard as a contractor and builder earlier in life, but once he had saved sufficient reserves to live his unpretentious kind of life, he decided to retire and give his declining years more fully to the Lord. This is wholesome to behold in this money-mad, pleasure-crazy world. Many a man, trapped by materialism, chases money all the way to the grave and never really lives. I t is good to see a man who knows what he wants, which isn't too much, and is satisfied when God grants it. Al could still be in the rat race, still trying to meet time schedules, still haggling with subcontractors, still tearing down barns and building bigger ones. Blessed is the man that can lean back in his chair in peace and enjoy a good book. Blessed is the man who realizes that the abundant life is more than making money — and does something about it.

Al and Johnnie live in what I would call a double mobile home, but which they call a coach. It makes for lots of room for two people, and even a guest room for folk like me. It is neatly furnished and very homey. They also have a travel trailer, which has everything

the coach has, except that it is much smaller. Part of the year they remain at home in Eugene, but when the weather is less desirable (according to Oregonians it is never *undesirable!)* they take off for elsewhere, visiting friends and relatives and otherwise enjoying life in the Son.

You can learn something about people by finding out who their heroes are. I sometimes ask new acquaintances about the people they admire most, and I find the answers revealing. Al is an admirer of Whitaker Chambers, made so by the reading of *Witness,* his autobiography. Chambers, you will recall, was the Communist who renounced the party and was the famous witness against Alger Hiss, who was convicted in part because of the adroitness of a young congressman named Richard Nixon. Al sees in Chambers a man of deep character and sensitivity, one who suffered immeasurably for the good of his country. His life as a witness against Communism is a lesson for anyone who supposes that truth always has its place on the throne, for Chambers was derided by everyone from President Truman to the officials in the State Department. Though a respected editor of *Time* magazine. there was a concerted effort to destroy him as a man because he dared to tell the truth about Communism in the highest echelons of government.

It says something about Al Weeks that he would come to identify with the story of Whitaker Chambers. He has me reading the book, and I must say that I have never read anything that so well explains why Communism holds sway over so ‘many people in the world, and why so few ever come to renounce it as Chambers did.

Thank God for the likes of Whitaker Chambers and Al Weeks.

David and Helen McCormick are among the new friends I have made this year, having been in their home while in meetings in Amarillo. Making new friendships like theirs is akin to striking oil, for they are such a blessing to all who know them. They are a testimonial to the truth of God’s tender loving care as promised in Rom. 8:28: “In everything, as we know, God cooperates for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose.” David McCormick can say as did another David who was also a man after God’s own heart: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” and Helen could say the same.

Helen has spent many of her years in bed due to a birth defect seriously impairing the use of her legs. It was only faith and perseverance that got her out of bed onto crutches. Even though everyone supposed she could never marry, and certainly not be a mother, she has done both gloriously. DeAun is her lovely junior high school daughter, while Tolley is younger and has a big time being a real boy. School had just started when I was there, and I had a lot of fun walking DeAun to school each morning, carrying her books and meeting her friends.

Those who have known Helen all these years say that it was something to behold to see her making her way down the aisle at the meetinghouse on a crutch with a baby in her arms, denying all that fate was suppose to have done to her. She married a strong, handsome, intelligent guy that wasn't suppose to marry a handicapped person, having none himself except a minor hearing problem. Friends could not understand why David would marry Helen, which only shows that love has not as yet been convincing enough to enough people.

In those earlier years of his life with Helen, David made his living in watch repairing, a trade he still follows, and he was busy in the Lord's work as a singer and music teacher. In another respect he was like his namesake in that he was a beautiful singer in the congregation, some saying his was the loveliest voice they had ever heard. He loved his work as chorus director for the Training School directed by the non-class Churches of Christ in Amarillo, and he traveled with them over the country, encouraging many people with their gift of song.

Then tragedy struck David's life as it had Helen's. Surgery that held promise of relieving him of a minor hearing problem (He wore a hearing aid all along) left him totally deaf. This ended his career as a singing teacher and silenced him as a singer, for all he can manage vocally is to speak sentences that he himself cannot hear. So the dear woman he married became his ears, further complementing their oneness even amidst handicaps. David has learned to read lips fairly well, and especially those of his wife, for he reads Helen's lips almost without looking!

David and Helen well illustrate a point that I have often made in teaching philosophy to college students. In dealing with the problem of evil and suffering we have to face up to the question of *Why do such tragedies befall good people?* God has given us the kind of world in which the gross tragedies often produce what nothing else will, beauty of soul and strength of character. Great poets, artists and musicians would never have been had it not been for the hardships they suffered. While God did not intend that David and Helen McCormick be smitten as they have been, He nonetheless stepped in and created something beautiful in their situation. Even Jesus was made perfect through what he suffered, the scriptures assure us. It is somehow in the tragic drama of our lives that God does His creative work in us who love Him.

God's beauty is evident in the lives of David and Helen. There is a sweet patience and a living hope that makes one oblivious to their handicaps. They love life, love each other, and love people. Helen, who was not expected to live when she was but a girl, illustrates what Jesus must have meant when he spoke of "having life and having it abundantly." While visiting with Helen, I read to her C. S. Lewis' new book about the grief he suffered in the death of his wife. I could tell that she was relating to Lewis on a level beyond my reach. She is on a wave length of higher frequency than mine when it comes to what Paul

speaks of in 2 Cor. 1:4: “He comforts us in all our troubles, so that we in turn may be able to comfort others in any trouble of theirs and to share with them the consolation we ourselves receive from God.”

My friend and brother Thomas Langford, who has known David McCormick all these years, says that the beauty now in David’s countenance is even greater than the loveliness that was his as a sweet singer in Israel. Thomas speaks of his patience and quiet persistence amidst difficulties and of a bearing that is hard to account for except that God has touched him with His grace.

In all this David and Helen have become free people in Jesus. In recent years they have read widely, moving beyond the confines of Church of Christ literature to a larger world of concern. They have visions of a more spiritual and more responsible brotherhood, believing that their place is where they have always been, the non-class Churches of Christ. Here they do their labor of love, *walking* by faith and *listening* with hope, trusting God to give victory to His people in a world acquainted with grief. — *the Editor*

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READERS' EXCHANGE

REAGAN FOR CONGRESS

The name of David Reagan is known to readers of this journal, for he has through the years made several contributions of high quality to our efforts. All this time he has been professor at Austin College in Sherman, Texas. The big news is that he is running for Congress, the 4th district of Texas, which is none other than Speaker Sam Rayburn’s old seat. He will be running on the Republican ticket, which is an odd thing for any Texan to be doing. But David is far from being a typical partisan politician. His ambition, first and last, is to be a Christian statesman.

Some of us have been saying for a long time now that more dedicated Christians should enter politics. Well, here is our chance to help put a fine and good man in Washington. I am going to ask those of you who have such concerns to join Ouida and me in sending a contribution to Reagan for Congress, Box 100, Sherman, Texas 75090. Five or ten dollars or so will not be a great deal to you, but it will demonstrate to this brother that we wish him well and that we admire him for his spunk. But this is not an act of blind courage on his part, for he really has a good chance of being elected. Long time a professor of government, he has been where the action is and he knows his stuff. Besides,

the electorate in his counties have before gone for Republicans Richard Nixon and John Tower. And he is already at work, a year in advance. So he *can* make it, but he needs help, being a poor man. How about lending a helping hand, especially all of you Democrats! Remember what this journal has always stood for — crossing party lines!

132 MILLION BIBLES

If talk of Christians in politics turns you off (It shouldn't, you know), then I'll try my hand on the work of the American Bible Society, which does not cease to amaze me. Counting portions and selection of scripture, the society last year distributed over 132 million Bibles, over 4 million of which were passes out to men in the military. The society has translated the scriptures into most of the languages of earth, and yet there are over 800 translation projects now in progress. Its aim to place the Word of God in the hands of every man on earth in his own language or dialect is so worthy that it deserves the support and applause of every lover of God. The address in 1865 Broadway, New York 10023. They will gladly place your name on their mailing list whereby you will receive regular reports of the society's work.

CONCERNING WHITE SUPREMACY

I read "Concerning White Supremacy" with tears in my eyes. When I finished I tried to understand why I was so touched by this article. I think it is because I came face to face with my own prejudices. I saw clearly my own background of teaching. I was taught that we must have kindness and compassion for our inferior neighbor. We must not treat them badly but we must never forget that they have their place and we have ours and "never the twain shall meet." This teaching was not openly unkind, but when the husk is shucked away it was white supremacy out and out. — *Wendell Huddleston,* 4613 *35th, Lubbock, Texas 79414.*

I haven't read Bryan Vinson's article yet, but your reply was just wonderful. Really, I mean it. It was factual and thought-provoking and kind without being condescending. As you said, even *if* white people were superior to black people, I cannot believe that anyone, much less a Christian could be so unkind as to call this to their attention. We discussed your article in our Bible class. — *Rosemary Blackstock, Lufkin, Texas.*

My task is very similar to yours. I am a white teacher in a predominantly black college, SWCC in Terrell. I believe your article should have a wide circulation, and I am wondering if you plan to run a reprint for mass distribution. — *A. Hugh Graham,* 2437 *Club Terrace, Dallas, Texas 75237.*

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